

Creating a value-based rapid wetland assessment method

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Currently the Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Program uses a condition-based rapid (Level 2) assessment method to measure the health of non-tidal wetlands and how disturbances impact wetland function. In order to capture non-condition features, such as a wetland's value for rare or endangered species or being a unique habitat type in Delaware, we created a value-based rapid assessment method. Wetland values are useful because they capture non-condition related wetland benefits such as flood storage, habitat provision, supporting rare species, diversity, education, and recreation. This 7-metric method was designed to be a companion to the traditional Delaware Rapid Assessment Method (DERAP) used for assessing wetlands on a watershed basis, for evaluating proposed wetland projects, determining appropriate mitigation for wetland impacts, and for prioritizing wetland parcels for protection and restoration. Values included are: **rarity/uniqueness, wetland polygon size, habitat availability, Delaware Ecological Network, habitat complexity, flood storage capacity, and education potential.** Assessment results can be compared to DNREC's reference data from wetlands nearby or of similar type. The value assessment method will be made available to practitioners and the public with trainings available starting in fall 2014. More information will be posted online at: <http://de.gov/delawarewetlands>.